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ABSTRACT

This paper outlines a plan for the use of the expertise, knowledge, and resources of the many non-governmental organizations (NGOs) that provide preschool and day care services (educare) in South Africa to foster cooperation and collaboration in a time of rapid political change. The paper notes that because of a lack of governmental support for educare, NGOs have attempted to meet the needs of young children and their families through innovative preschool and day care programs and strategies. After listing the inadequacies of the present government's educare policies, the paper discusses the activities and future role of the 23 major NGOs that provide comprehensive preschool education and day care. The formation of an NGO network is advocated, and some of the factors likely to facilitate and inhibit such collaboration are examined. Finally, the future relationship between a fully democratic South African government and NGOs is explored. An appendix lists the 23 major educare NGOs by region. (MDM)

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COLLABORATION FOR EDUCARE DEVELOPMENT: THE PARTICIPATION OF GOVERNMENT AND NGO's IN A FUTURE EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCARE SYSTEM IN SOUTH AFRICA

by

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INTRODUCTION

The importance of early childhood education in the development of young children has been universally acknowledged. The benefits to the individual child, the family and community has been illustrated in numerous research studies conducted both in South Africa and abroad.

In South Africa the present government has given little support to early educare. Because of this, non-governmental organisations (NGO's) have attempted to meet the needs of families as far as resources permit. These NGO's have led the way with innovative programmes and strategies. At the same time NGO's have sought limited funding which has resulted in unhealthy and often destructive competition. Several writers (Barker, 1992; Boshoff, 1986; van den Berg and Vergnani, 1987.) have commented on the fragmentation of NGO's and the unhealthy competitiveness prevailing. Barker (1992:26) writes of the

> '*...increasing level of geographical competitiveness between agencies, with different agencies overlapping in the territories in which they serve the preschool facilities ... The problem of geographical competitiveness is so great that three different agencies can sometimes be involved with the same communities, causing fissiparous rather than unifying tendencies in those communities*'.

With the political changes taking place and with the emphasis on reconstruction, NGO's now are forced to consider collaborative strategies and efforts to meet the demands.

This paper attempts to outline a plan for the utilisation of the wealth of expertise, knowledge and resources of the NGO's servicing the educare field.

PRESCHOOL EDUCARE IN SOUTH AFRICA

There are some 6.4 million children of preschool age in South Africa. Of these (52%) live in rural areas, the other half in urban and informal settlements. Over 3.3 million are considered to be from severely economically disadvantaged families, that is, where the household income is less than R8 503 per annum. These children are at risk. (Lategan 1990)

While the demographics indicate a need of immense scale, government action has been minimal. The existing educare situation has been well described by van den Berg and Vergnani, (1987) who write that:

- preschool educare is segregated as a matter of state policy and of law
- preschool educare is fragmented among a bewildering array of state departments and bodies
- state preschool provision is totally inadequate
- state preschool provision occurs inversely proportional to need
- educare standards as demanded by the state are unrealistic
- state preschool provision significantly lacks co-ordination and co-operation, and does not provide a comprehensive and integrated service and
- there is an absence of democratic participation in that service are not provided in consultation with the users.

THE EXISTING NGO POSITION

The main burden of responsibility for providing educare in all it's aspects has fallen on NGO's. Support has been in the form of educare training, resource centres, funding, research, equipment provision, curriculum development and management training amongst others. The environment in which NGO's have had to operate has during this time been hostile, disabling and non-supportive.

Liddell (1991:69) describes the NGO contribution as follows:

> '*...South Africa's present ECE system can be rated as one of the best examples in the world of a self-help service delivered in a low-cost framework. The system has evolved over 20 years to meet the needs of a range of communities, and this has made ECE flexible and diverse*'.

Van den Berg and Vergnani (1987:3), feel that

> '*...in this context the extent, variety and vigour of non-state preschool endeavour is remarkable*' and that '*the non-state sector offers more examples than the state sector of approaches to the problems of preschool provision that are based on the need for them to be comprehensive and integrated.*'

There are currently 23 NGO's offering comprehensive educare services in South Africa. These are listed in Appendix A. Linking NGO's with the geographic areas in which they operate, the spread is illustrated in diagram 1 with detail in Table 1.

As can be seen the Eastern Cape and Western Cape are well serviced, the PWV and Natal marginally whilst the rest of the country - Northern Cape, North, West & Eastern Transvaal has no NGO infrastructure.

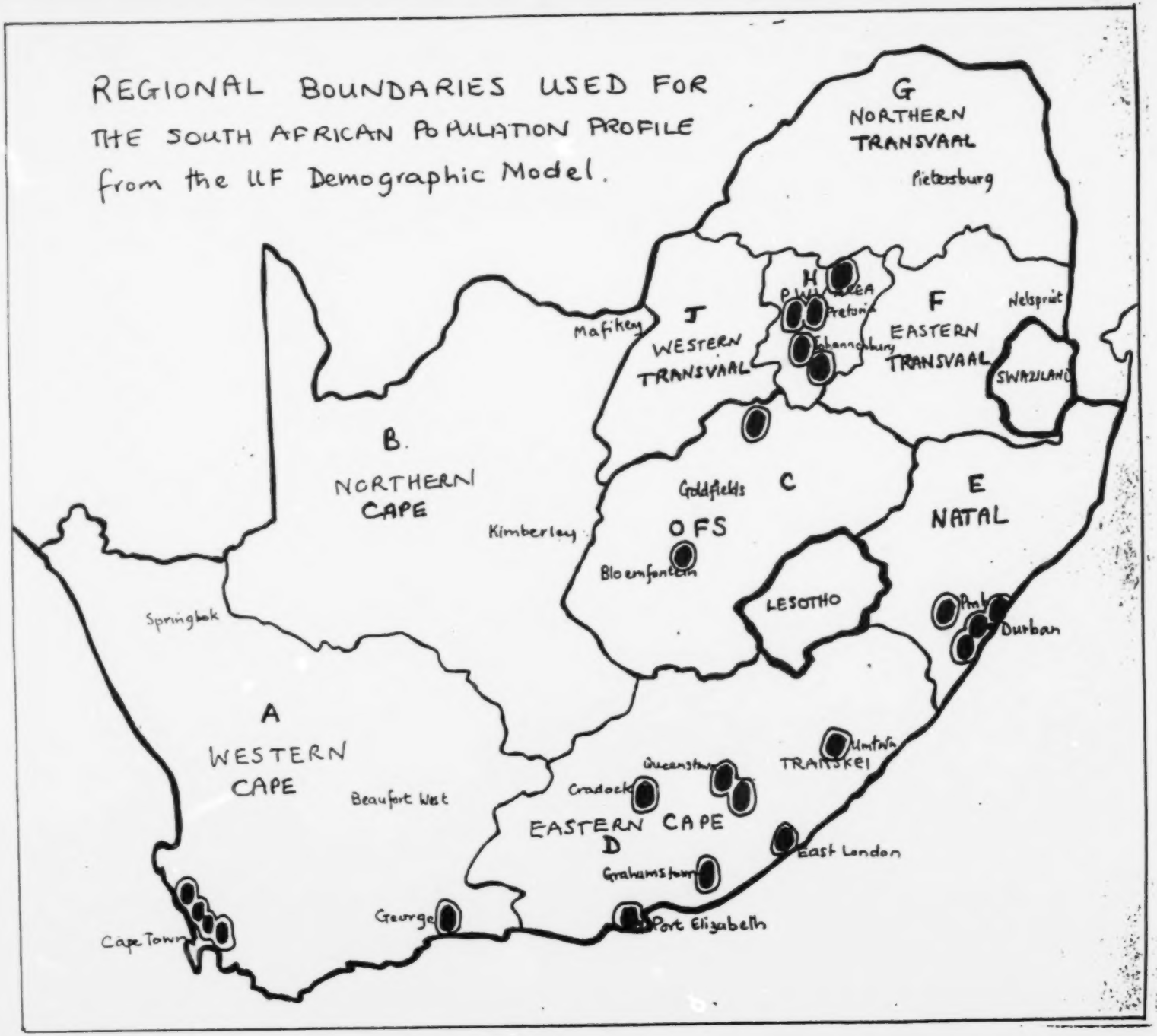
REGIONAL BOUNDARIES USED FOR THE SOUTH AFRICAN POPULATION PROFILE from the IIF Demographic Model.
G
NORTHERN TRANSVAAL
Pietersburg
H
Pretoria
J
WESTERN TRANSVAAL
Mafikeng
F
EASTERN TRANSVAAL
Nelspruit
Johannesburg
SWAZILAND
B.
NORTHERN CAPE
Kimberley
Goldfields
C
OFS
Bloemfontein
E
NATAL
LESOTHO
Durban
Springbok
A
WESTERN CAPE
Beaufort West
Queenstown
Cradock
EASTERN CAPE
D
TRANSKEI
Umtata
East London
Grahamstown
George
Port Elizabeth
Cape Town

DIAGRAM 1

TABLE 1

Number of children and NGO's based in each region

	REGION	NO OF CHILDREN	MAJOR NGO'S
A	Western Cape	444 800	5
B	Northern Cape	202 700	-
C	Orange Free State	405 400	2
D	Eastern Cape	1 280 500	7
E	Natal	1 393 700	4
F	Eastern Transvaal	331 200	-
G	Northern Transvaal	873 600	-
H	PWV	1 135 000	5
J	Western Transvaal	295 800	-
	TOTAL	6 362 700	23

[Source for number of children by region: Short A 1992]

THE ROLE OF NGO's IN A FUTURE EDUCARE SYSTEM

Increasingly, NGO's are being recognised by governments as being crucial to development. The predominant reason is that NGO's have built up a reservoir of information, skills and expertise which the state cannot match or reproduce. The changes taking place in South Africa provide both an opportunity and a challenge to NGO's active in the educare field.

NGO's can help move governments towards pragmatic approaches to educare which they themselves have found to be successful. They have a responsibility to inform government of what has proved successful and what has not.

The specific responsibilities of NGO's could be:

- Advice: to government on policy, legislation and regulations dealing with educare.

- Awareness building: through discussion, reflection, questioning and analysis helping the government and communities become aware of the importance of educare in the early years.

- Facilitation: of action by communities, parent bodies, welfare associations, churches, employers etc. who are prepared to initiate and establish educare centres. In a sense NGO's would be providing the building blocks for community action.

- Training: educare workers to work in educare programmes. The expertise developed must continue.

- Leadership and human development: of adults in the community who are involved in educare. NGO's have been the major providers of such leadership and human development and should continue to do so. This is particularly true and necessary with regard to the empowerment of women.

- Resource provision: providing resources for educare programmes and workers.

- Activism: giving voice to communities whose interests are discounted.

- Research and evaluation: finding out new information, evaluating programme and centre performance.

A NETWORK OF EDUCARE NGO's

Collaboration between the government and NGO's is vital if we are to meet the needs of the country's preschool children. Collaboration between educare NGO's is as important.

At present educare NGO's, despite the overt competition which exists, have reached broad consensus about goals, structures and provision options, training and resources development.

Given the important role which non-governmental organisations are likely to play in a democratic South Africa it is now time to create a formal network of NGO educare organisations. For a comprehensive and beneficial educare strategy permitting all children access to educare to be developed, an effective and strong formal NGO network is essential. The general focus of such a

network would be on cross-fertilisation and dissemination of ideas and information, skills and expertise.

What would such a network do?

1. promote educare nationally

2. develop, share and provide resources for educare

3. disseminate information on educare

4. establish a national data-base on educare

5. co-ordinate and rationalise training and support services nationally

6. assess needs in specific regions

7. enhance each others institutional capacity by sharing expertise

8. lobby government on educare

9. plan, co-ordinate and implement intervention in geographic regions.

The network structure should be at two levels. At a national level where all NGO's perform the above tasks from a national perspective. Secondly, at regional levels, perhaps in the regions

outlined in diagram 1. Presently only the Eastern Cape region has such a networking structure - (NECTA) the Network of Educare Training Agencies (Eastern Cape).

FACTORS LIKELY TO FACILITATE COLLABORATION

Various factors are likely to facilitate collaboration at both regional and national levels.

- The degree of need could force NGO's to co-operate in the interests of all children.
- strong government support of NGO's in the field with an enabling and supportive environment is essential for success.
- tolerance of different programmes, provision options, curricula and training methodologies.
- sufficient financial support from the government and the private sector.
- vesting the responsibility of educare in one state ministry.

FACTORS LIKELY TO INHIBIT COLLABORATION

There are factors which likely to inhibit collaboration. These include:

- the lack of a will to co-operate and co-ordinate because of 'turf'.

- self-interest of NGO's and individuals.

- resistance to sharing information and ideas.

- limits on available resources of a future government to meet the educare needs of the country.

- the scale of the problem in a sense may be overwhelming for NGO's to take a national view of the problem.

- severe human resource problems and limitations.

THE STATES RELATIONSHIP TO NGO's

The relationship between the apartheid government and educare NGO's has been characterised by mistrust. NGO's have in fact actively sought the downfall of the existing government. A legitimate democratic government will however have the NGO infrastructure as an ally.

A healthy and positive relationship between government and educare NGO's will therefore be crucial to the tasks of meeting the nation's educare needs. All the good work done by NGO's will need the political will and financial backing of the state. Without this the impact of NGO's will remain inadequate.

The state's role should be to play an enabling function by creating a positive environment conducive to co-operation and collaboration.

More specifically the governments responsibilities should be to:

- determine national educare policy and see to its execution by other authorities who are delegated powers
- prepare legislation and regulations so that high quality educare is maintained.
- promote educare and the development of facilities and services
- co-ordinate and monitor educare provision in terms of national policy and ensure its sufficiency
- subsidise regional and local authorities in respect of their delegated powers
- provide subsidies for programmes and to organisations involved in educare training and provision
- determine teacher training requirements and the need for teachers and provide opportunities for training
- provide, initiate and disseminate research and the development of knowledge about educare.

CONCLUSION

For every South African preschool child to have access to educare it is necessary that partnerships be developed in the educare field.

Because of the role which NGO's have played over the years they are strategically well placed to take the lead in developing educare to it's fullest in South Africa. Wilson and Ramphele (1989:7) warn us however that

> *'... non-governmental organisations have a vital role to play in the wider liberation struggle provided that their goals are carefully thought through so as to be consistent with the long-run goals of a truly free society and that the methods they use are consistent with, and help toward achieving, the ends they seek'.*

With a government showing the willingness to support our work we can move towards giving every child access to educare.

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UWC 1987

Wilson F and Ramphele M
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David Philip Publishers. Cape Town

MAJOR EDUCARE NGO's IN SOUTH AFRICA

REGION A - WESTERN CAPE
Early Learning Resource Unit
Western Cape Foundation for Community Work
Grassroots Educare Trust
Vumani Preschool Project, Cape Town
Preschool Resource Centre Southern Cape, George

REGION B - NORTHERN CAPE
nil

REGION C - ORANGE FREE STATE
Ntataise, Viljoenskroon
Bloemfontein Educare Resource Centre

REGION D - EASTERN CAPE
Port Elizabeth Early Learning Centre
Centre for Social Development, Grahamstown
Ciskei Early Learning Centre, Zwelitsha
Border Early Learning Centre, East London
Queenstown Early Learning Centre
Khokela Early Learning Centre, Fish River
Masikhule Preschool Development Centre

REGION E - NATAL
TREE, Pietermaritzburg
TREE, Durban
Urban Foundation Preschool Project, Durban
Chatsworth Early Learning Centre

REGION F - EASTERN TRANSVAAL
nil

REGION G - NORTHERN TRANSVAAL
nil

REGION H - PWV
Entokozweni Early learning Centre, Soweto & Alexandra
African Self Help Association
Northern Transvaal Association for ECE, Pretoria
Woz'Obona, Johannesburg - rural areas (Tvl, Transkei)
Small Beginnings, Pretoria

REGION J - WESTERN TRANSVAAL
nil